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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 003399

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/RSA, AND AF/E

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TAGS: PREL PGOV MCAP SO AU

SUBJECT: USAU: LAST-MINUTE RUSH TO BEEF UP AMISOM

REF: USUN NEW YORK 1186

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN A. SIMON, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶11. (U) This message contains Action Requests in paras 6 and  
¶12.

¶12. (C) Summary: With AMISOM's mandate running out and a withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from Somalia's capital imminent, the African Union (AU) and its partners are spending the final days of 2008 in a diplomatic race to secure financial resources to beef up AMISOM. Strong evidence that these efforts are paying off came on December 19 during meetings between the AU's partners and AU officials. The positive developments included announcements by both the EU and the UK that they were prepared to financially support AMISOM's reinforcement, and further announcements that up to three ECOMOG battalions would be deployed to Somalia as part of AMISOM and that Algeria would put 10 aircraft at the disposal of the AU to airlift AMISOM troops from contributing countries to Mogadishu. However, a critical element is UN support to sustain the mission over the long-term. AU Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra expressed interest in a French/ British compromise proposal in lieu of a full UN PKO. End Summary.

¶13. (C) The closing days of the year are seeing a burst of activity by the AU and its international partners aimed at securing enough funds to build a more robust AMISOM. AMISOM's two Troop Contributing Countries, Burundi and Uganda, have had high-level military emissaries in Addis Ababa lobbying for equipment, training, and operational support. Their message has been clear: if international donors cannot convince additional troop contributing countries to join the mission in time to replace departing Ethiopian forces and provide a mechanism to financially sustain the mission on a long-term basis, they will withdraw their respective forces even before Ethiopia does. According to the Burundians and Ugandans, their Ethiopian interlocutors have told them that the Ethiopian troop withdrawal will be complete by January 5.

¶14. (C) At a meeting with USAU Ambassador, Lamamra, who returned to Addis the morning of December 19 after his meetings at the UN in New York, discussed his current thinking on how to forestall an AMISOM withdrawal in the face of Ethiopia's departure. His plan included four key elements discussed previously: establishment of a government of national unity, reinforcement of AMISOM in short order, UN support for the mission in the long-term, and, as a result of these three elements, a finite delay in Ethiopia's withdrawal. Ambassador encouraged Lamamra to mobilize African support for a UN PKO, which the USG is seeking before

the end of the year. Lamamra asked if the US would push for a PKO over the objections of the UK, French, and UN Secretariat, noting that the UN might then drag its feet on implementing the PKO.

¶5. (C) As an alternative, he expressed interest in a French/British proposal (discussed reftel) he had learned about while in New York. The proposal calls for a two-phased peacekeeping operation. The first phase would consist of an interim stabilization force for Somalia, to be followed by a UN PKO once certain conditions are met. Lamamra suggested negotiating on the basis of this proposal, but changing it by making the establishment of a PKO more certain. He suggested March 1 as the date when such a PKO would come into existence. He then said the UN could advance funding to AMISOM in preparation for this PKO, as was done when AMIS transitioned to UNAMID. Under this scenario, he said, the force would be supported logistically and financially by the UN until it was re-hatted and became a conventional peacekeeping force. Aware that the U.S. is interested in pursuing a full PKO resolution for Somalia, Lamamra suggested that the U.S. might want to meet the British and French proposal "half-way." (Comment: In essence, Lamamra is suggesting changing the French/British proposal so that it mirrors a UN PKO in everything but name. End Comment)

¶6. (C) Action request: Post seeks guidance on whether to encourage Lamamra in pursuing a compromise approach based on the French/ British proposal.

¶7. (C) Later in the day, Lamamra told a group of

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international partners that included the U.S. that the withdrawal of Ethiopia from Mogadishu should be seen not as a negative event but as "an opportunity with challenges that need to be addressed." In a meeting with AMISOM Force Commander Major-General Francis Okello, AU Special Representative for Somalia Nicholas Bwakira, and Burundian Minister of National Defense Lt. General Germain Niyoyankana in attendance, Lamamra stated emphatically, "The withdrawal of AMISOM from Somalia is not an option. All our partners see the disaster that would be created by such a security vacuum."

¶8. (C) General Okello then gave a dire report of the consequences of AMISOM staying on after Ethiopia's withdrawal without additional reinforcements. In such a scenario, he said AMISOM's supply routes would be compromised, its intelligence capabilities lost, factional infighting over territory and resources expected, and humanitarian assistance halted. However, Okello concurred with Lamamra that withdrawal is not an option. Said the General: "I do not want to discuss withdrawal. It would mean all we have done, we have done in vain."

¶9. (C) Lamamra then revealed two positive developments that suggest support for AMISOM is growing among AU member states. First, Lamamra shared news that Nigeria's Federal Government had announced that it would deploy three battalions of ECOMOG soldiers to Somalia before the end of the first quarter of next year. Along with the additional Ugandan and Burundian battalions, that would bring to nine the number of battalions in AMISOM. The first of the Nigerian battalions could be deployed as early as January. As reported before, Lamamra recommends that each additional AMISOM battalion be deployed in such a way as to replace Ethiopian battalions that are withdrawing.

¶10. (C) Lamamra then said that Algeria had committed to provide 10 aircraft, including five Ilyushin-76s and five C-130s, to transport African troops being deployed to Somalia. Doing so would free up resources that the U.S. was considering allocating to airlifting AMISOM troops and using them to support AMISOM in another way.

¶11. (C) Following Lamamra's and Okello's presentations, the EU's Ambassador announced that the EU member-states had agreed unanimously to support AMISOM and the EU was ready to make a financial contribution. He went on to say that the EU had finalized a decision to contribute 20 million Euros to support AMISOM in the short-term, and it would also consider advancing part of a 300 million Euro contribution from its Peace Fund to pay troop allowances, and build a hospital and a mission headquarters. The funds from the Peace Fund would be available during the first quarter of 2009. USAU Ambassador followed by noting in addition to the support the US had already promised to train, equip, deploy, and sustain the additional Ugandan and Burundian battalions, the US had funding to support the equipping and deployment of one Nigerian battalion as well. Ambassador also said it was important between now and Christmas for AU member states to lobby UNSC members to support a peacekeeping operation.

¶12. (C) ACTION REQUEST: USAU requests guidance on whether further funding could be made available to pay for airlifting the two additional ECOMOG battalions beyond the Nigerian battalion for which funding is already secured.

¶13. (C) There are two key meetings related to AMISOM in the coming days. On Sunday, December 21, IGAD will be holding an extraordinary meeting in Addis to discuss the political developments in Somalia, including the recent failed attempts by President Yusuf to dismiss Prime Minister Nur Adde, as well as possible IGAD sanctions against Yusuf and other "spoilers" of the political process. On Monday, December 22, the AU Peace and Security Council will hold a Ministerial Meeting. Somalia is on the agenda at that session and Lamamra said the aim of the Council will be to revise and renew the AMISOM mandate. Lamamra noted the renewed mandate would be a short extension (perhaps two months from the current expiration date in January) in anticipation of a UN peacekeeping operation supplanting AMISOM in March.

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